

everyone of these proposals, and were more than ever convinced that the only possible solution of the dispute was, to use their own words, an absolute sale of the whole of the land in dispute to the Crown, and after having for many days patiently heard all they had to say, he had no hesitation in expressing his entire concurrence in that conviction.

During the whole time the discussions had lasted he had refused so take any part in them, or to answer a single question, or to give the slightest inkling of his intention. They had declared that they had said all they had to say, and now formally called upon him to declare, whether or not, as the only means of preventing bloodshed, he was prepared to accept the block and complete its purchase. He knew the responsibility which his decisive answer would entail upon him, but he had not the slightest hesitation in giving it. Matene Te Whiwhi, in one of his speeches, said that the chiefs when they handed over the block to him at Wharangi, in October, 1864, committed a grave mistake in not then and there concluding the sale without reference to the opinion of the tribes—that had the chiefs adopted that course, their people must have acquiesced, and there would have been an end of the matter. He (Dr. Featherston) repeated what he had then and often since said, that he would purchase no land without the consent of the people. But what did he mean by the consent of the people or tribe? He did not mean that the opposition of one man (not a principal chief) should prevent a whole tribe selling their land. Neither did he mean that a small section of one tribe should be allowed to forbid some six or seven tribes disposing of a block which they were anxious to sell. However much he might insist upon having the consent of the tribe, of all the *real* and principal claimants, he would be no party to such a manifest injustice as would be implied by one or two men probably possessing little or no interest in the land, forbidding the tribe selling it, or in a small section of one tribe opposing the wishes of some half-dozen tribes, especially when the carrying out of the decision of the majority was the only means of avoiding an inter-tribal war.

The question then that arose in his mind was whether there was such a consent of the tribes assembled before him to the sale as would justify him in at once declaring his acceptance of their offer. He had hitherto in all the purchases he had made studiously avoided buying a disputed block, and certainly would not do so now. None of the purchases he had made had ever been impugned; they had all been open and above board. Some Natives had undoubtedly complained, not of the validity of the purchase, but that they had not received their fair share of the purchase money. He never had himself distributed the purchase money, and never would. He had always handed over the purchase money to chiefs nominated by the sellers, to be by them distributed; and such would ever be the course pursued by him. The tribes must hold not him but the chiefs appointed to receive and distribute the purchase money responsible for its equitable apportionment. Once the money was placed by him in the hands of the nominated chiefs, his responsibility ceased. But the question is, whether he had such a consent to the sale as would justify him in accepting the block. He would therefore call upon every one of the tribes to declare publicly before this meeting by their chiefs whether or not the tribes consented to the sale.

He would call upon the several tribes to give their answer by the chiefs. He called upon the Wanganui tribe to say whether or not they were agreed to the sale. Tamati Puna at once said, "We are unanimous; all have consented." Dr. Featherston then called upon the Ngatiapa to declare what their decision was. Governor Hunia on the part of the tribe said, "You know our decision; we all insist upon the sale." What say the Muaupoko tribe? Hoani Te Puihi replied on behalf of the tribe, "We are all unanimous in favor of the sale." What is the answer of the Ngatitōa to this question? and he called upon Matene Te Whiwhi, Tamihana Te Rauparaha, and Hohepa, distinctly and severally to reply on behalf of the tribe they represented. The three chiefs, one after the other, declared that the tribe were unanimous. What said the Rangitane? Peeti Te Aweawe replied, "We also are unanimous; all have consented." Lastly, he would call upon the Ngatiraukawa who he knew were divided in their opinions. Ihakara expressed his regret that they were not like all the other tribes unanimous in favour of the sale, but the large majority of them were so determined to sell, especially all the principal claimants, that he insisted upon the purchase being completed. Knowing that those who were at present holding out would soon become consenting parties, he never would listen to any other mode of adjusting the dispute. Dr. Featherston then said that his course was clear. Five of the six tribes were unanimous in their determination to sell, and of the Ngatiraukawa only a small section opposed the sale. Of that section the two principal chiefs, Nepia Taratoa and Aperahama Te Huru, had some time since given their consent, and had repeatedly protested against the delay that had occurred in bringing the transaction to a close. Great chiefs like them were not in the habit of repudiating engagements entered into in the face of the whole tribe. He was certain, therefore, that the present opposition would not be persisted in. Of the other opponents many had already told him that they would abide by the decision of the majority, and would sign the deed of purchase. He felt, therefore, so confident that the deed would ultimately be executed by all the real claimants, that he had no difficulty in publicly announcing his acceptance of the block, and in congratulating them upon this long standing feud being thus amicably settled and finally adjusted. [This announcement was received with great applause, not a few of the opponents exclaiming, "Rangitikei is fairly sold, is for ever gone from us."] Dr. Featherston then reminded them that there were other questions to settle, viz., the price, in what proportion the purchase money was to be divided, and what chiefs were to distribute the money. The two latter might be left till the deed was signed, but the price must be fixed before the meeting broke up. Several amounts had been mentioned, some exorbitant, others not unreasonable. Let the tribes leave this matter in the hands of their chiefs, and they would find him prepared to meet them in a liberal spirit. This was ultimately fixed at £25,000.

On the following Monday morning, 16th April, a formal announcement was made of the terms on which the sale had been concluded. A memorandum of agreement affirming the sale and describing the boundaries of the land to be ceded was then prepared, and was afterwards signed by upwards of two hundred of the principal claimants. The majority of the chiefs present then urged that an instalment of the purchase money should be at once paid; but as Hunia and a few others objected, Dr. Featherston refused to pay a single farthing without the consent of all, and until the deed of purchase was executed.